

From Story Elements to Inferencing.

Teacher Preparation

Carmen spent more than a month guiding her students to easily identify basic story elements; for example: plot, setting, theme, point of view, conflict, and protagonist versus antagonist. From fairy tales to novels, from poetry to drama, they had examined, identified, and discussed until she felt her students had a firm grasp on these elements in application. Now they were all ready for a new challenge, and Carmen wanted it to center on a better understanding of inference, a skill that was often difficult for students whose concrete thinking was just giving way to a higher level.

She decided to focus on character and setting, and she selected a situation from her students' daily interactions as a starting point. In this role-play, three students would be walking down the hall at school. A fourth student would approach them, frowning; she would suddenly put her hands on her hips. The entire scene would rely on actions and body language, with no dialogue necessary.

To prepare for the activity, Carmen constructed four copies of the scenario on index cards, one for each girl. She also used large bulletin board paper to record and post the following questions:

Girl's Feelings	Girl's Thoughts in the girl's day?	What just happened had been in the mall?	How different if they

When everything was ready, she mentally rehearsed her lesson.

Activity Starter

Carmen used the few minutes between classes to ask four girls to participate in the role-play, and she handed each an index card as a tangible reminder of their parts. Once they were settled into their assignments, she greeted the class and instructed them to watch the four characters and notice their reactions in the situation that was about to be presented.

After the skit, she initiated the discussion with a variety of questions, all of which eventually led back to the four primary queries on the chart. Carmen used this chart for recording their key responses. Sample questions included:

- What do you think was going on with the girl who had her hands on her hips?
- What was she feeling?